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Community gardens in Placer County grow with grant funds

By: Placer County Board of Supervisor Jim Holmes



Many different items come before the Board of Supervisors, some of which deal with sensitive issues that require the board to make difficult decisions.

While making these difficult decisions is part of our job, it is always refreshing to hear good news and see the good work being done by county staff and the community.

That is why I was so happy to learn that Placer County Health and Human Services was awarded a grant in the amount of \$12,500 from the Health Education Council to support six Placer County

community garden projects.

These grant funds support projects that will initiate or expand community gardens that serve CalFresh-eligible populations.

Among the recipients of these funds was the First United Methodist Church of Loomis. The grant funds will be used to make improvements to some of the eight raised beds in the garden, including raising the height of the beds to make them more worker friendly and to replenish the soil for future crops.

In 2014, the church turned an overflow parking area into a garden where they could grow vegetables to be donated to the Placer County Food Bank.

The garden is just one way the church is able to reach out to the community to help serve others. Last year's harvest yielded 500 pounds of fresh vegetables, mostly cabbage and squash. With the help of an army of volunteers from the church, ranging in age from 9 to 70, and the expert guidance of the Sierra College Sustainable Agriculture Society, the garden has grown exponentially!

So far this year alone, the church has donated 2,000 pounds of food to the Placer County Food Bank, including broccoli, peppers, bush beans and tomatoes.

Clearly, gardens such as the one at the United Methodist Church of Loomis provide a huge benefit to the people who receive the food; people who might not otherwise have access to fresh-from-the-garden vegetables.

But these gardens also benefit the volunteers who work together to create and maintain and improve the gardens.

At the United Methodist Church of Loomis, the volunteer force is made up of everyone from senior citizens to members of the church's youth group. These volunteers share their knowledge and gain knowledge from others and they work together as a team.

This garden has also given students studying agriculture at Sierra College an opportunity to take what they've learned in the classroom and put it to work out in the dirt, teaching the other volunteers as well.

I am proud of our Health and Human Services staff for making these grants a reality and I am pleased to know that there are multiple community garden projects throughout Placer County that will grow as a result of these funds from the Health Education Council. Yes, I sometimes have to make tough decisions but I feel blessed that I am part of a county and a community that also does so many good things.



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